

ABC 7 Chicago, April 11, 2005

According to the government, U.S. drivers are facing record gas prices for a fourth week in a row and there is no sign of any relief for car owners. An Illinois congressman wonders if Congress can help cut prices, while many consumers are looking to buy more fuel efficient vehicles.

Gas prices are high in Chicago and around the country. Some say those high prices have to do with the way gasoline is regulated in the U.S. and some folks are looking for a change.

"Maximum was \$20, now it's \$45. Way too much," said Basem Asad, limo driver.

Every motorist can recall a time when it was less expensive to fill up. Currently, American cities and states are permitted to use one of 16 gasoline blends. Illinois congressman Mark Kirk introduced legislation that would streamline the gasoline industry and help consumers in the long run.

"We should have a national gasoline market, and we should have the entire country move to one standard clean-burning fuel, then we would have full competition of the gasoline market," said Rep. Mark Kirk, (R) north suburbs.

Phil is an energy analyst for Alaron Trading. He says the American gasoline industry unnecessarily overburdens consumers.

"We are in a situation where we have federally-mandated shortages. If we lose one refinery, we are federally mandated, we can't bring in gas from somewhere else. It creates a shortage and it drives up price," said Phil Flynn, energy analyst.

Some consumers aren't waiting for any legislative help. Hybrid vehicles are in high demand.

"It used to be people who used to buy these hybrid cars were trying to make a statement. Now people are just looking to get them because of the gas mileage," said Brian Weinberg, Grossinger Toyota.

"It looks like gas prices are going to keep going up, not down. You can have a car that is like a normal car to drive, but you can go to the gas pump less," said Dan Fogel, prospective car buyer.

At Toyota in Oldtown, 62 people are on the waiting list for a Prius. Charlie Graziani waited seven months for his.

"My Range Rover, last time I filled it was \$65. Last time I filled this up it was \$16," said Graziani, Prius owner.

Congressman Kirk introduced another piece of legislation that would make a \$2,000 tax credit permanent for those who buy hybrid vehicles.